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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s the debate over what and whose history should be taught in U.S. schools resonated through the halls of the U.S. Congress, the national press, and the nation's schools. Some politicians and pundits denounced the findings of the National Standards for History, which subsequently became a major battleground in the nation's ongoing struggle to define its historical identity. To help readers understand what happened, this book traces the genealogy of the National History Standards Project from its origins as a neo-conservative reform movement to the drafting of the standards, through the 18 months of controversy, the debate that ensued, and the aftermath. Broad in scope, the case study includes debates on U.S. social history, world history, multiculturalism, established canons, national identity, cultural history, and liberal education. It illuminates the larger issue of how educational policy is made and contested in the United States, revealing how a debate about children's education actually became a struggle between competing political forces. Following the introduction, there are seven chapters: (1) "History Repeats Itself: Reform Cycles and the Social Studies Curriculum"0; (2) "Mapping an Alternative History: Shifting Historical Paradigms, 1960-1990"; (3) "A Conservative Restoration, 1981-Present"; (4) "Genesis of the National Center for History in the Schools and the National History Standards Project, 1987-1992"; (5) "Forging Unity: The National History Standards Project, 1992-1994"; (6) "The Consensus Unravels: The National History Standards in the Culture Wars, 1994-1996"; and (7) "Conclusion: Utopia Postponed." Two appendices include: "National History Standards Project Organizational Structure"; and "Overview of the Thirty One U.S. History Standards." Each chapter includes notes. Contains extensive references and a supplementary bibliography. (BT)

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